

WEEK IN BRUSSELS

Week ending Friday 30 March

European Commission backtracks on cross-border use of modular trucks

European Transport Commissioner, Siim Kallas, has backtracked on plans to allow modular trucks to travel freely across European borders under a new interpretation of EU law. Commissioner Kallas' proposals produced a strong display of opposition from MEPs on the European Parliament's Transport Committee, resulting in Mr Kallas apologising for neglecting to consult them, and promising to suspend the proposed change. The EU currently has a ban on the use of the over-sized mega-trucks – which can measure up to 25-metres and weigh up to 60 tonnes – largely because of safety and environmental concerns. Current rules say that European lorries may be no longer than 18.75 metres and weigh no more than 40 tonnes. (Source: EurActiv)

<http://www.euractiv.com/transport/amber-light-monster-truck-traffic-borders-news-511792>

European commercial vehicle registrations down 11.3% in February

Figures published by ACEA, the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, show that demand for new commercial vehicles was down in all major markets in February, leading to an overall 11.3% decline in the EU. The downturn ranged from 3.2% in France, to 6.9% in Germany, 16.6% in the UK, 24.4% in Spain and 29.8% in Italy. In total, 126,010 new vehicles were registered in the month, which counted on average one more working day across the EU than February last year. From January to February, markets in Germany and France slightly contracted, while the UK, Spain, and Italy faced double-digit downturns. Overall, the EU recorded 267,111 new commercial vehicles, or 7.9% less than in the first two months of 2011. (Source: ACEA)

http://www.acea.be/index.php/news/news_detail/commercial_vehicles_registrations_down_11.3_in_february

Commissioner Tajani hints at regulatory break for carmakers

European Industry Commissioner, Antonio Tajani, has stated that the adoption of new environmental rules for the automobile sector could be delayed because it is facing economic difficulties, as part of a package of measures to support carmakers. The measures will be detailed in the CARS 21 final report, due to be published on 6 June. Former Industry Commissioner Günter Verheugen previously called for a regulatory pause for carmakers in 2009, but the suggestion was rejected by EU ministers. The action plan, which could propose measures such as support for restructuring, will draw on the results of studies from the CARS 21 high-level group, which made a number of policy recommendations at the end of 2011. Mr Tajani stressed that he has no authority to change rules on carbon dioxide emissions from vehicles or how they are implemented. However, the next vehicle emission standard, Euro 7, which covers pollutants such as nitrogen oxide and particulates, is one of the regulations that might be postponed. (Source: ENDS)

<http://www.endseurope.com/28491/tajani-wants-regulatory-break-for-carmakers>



Sixth Summit between South Korea and EU held

The Sixth Summit between the Republic of Korea and the European Union (EU) has taken place in Seoul on 28 March 2012. The Republic of Korea was represented by President Lee Myung-bak and the EU

was represented by Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council and Mr. José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission. The leaders welcomed the expansion of bilateral trade after the provisional application of the Korea-EU Free Trade Agreement on 1 July 2011, and shared the understanding that the full implementation of the Korea-EU FTA is essential to further facilitate bilateral economic cooperation and to promote benefits of the FTA for both enterprises and consumers. (Source: Council of the European Union) http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/129272.pdf



Progress in cutting EU road deaths falls to 2% in 2011

Figures published by the European Commission show that progress in cutting road fatalities significantly slowed last year to -2%, compared with a strong EU-wide reduction throughout the last decade (on average -6%). A number of EU member states, such as the UK, Germany and Sweden, who have very strong safety records, now show a significant increase in deaths, whilst other member states, like Poland and Belgium who lag behind in road safety, also saw the number of deaths rise. Commenting on the figures, Transport Commissioner, Siim Kallas, stated: "These figures are a wake-up call. This is the slowest decrease in road deaths in a decade. We will need to sharply intensify efforts at EU and national level to reach our goal of cutting road fatalities in half again by 2020. I am writing to ministers in all Member States to ask for information about national road safety enforcement plans for 2012. I want to be reassured that even in tough economic times this important work, which is so central to road safety, is not being scaled back". (Source: European Commission) <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/12/326&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Week ahead

European Commission

Wednesday 4 April – DG Industry & Enterprise
Proposal to facilitate cross-border motor vehicle registration

Council of Ministers

No relevant activity

European Parliament

Constituency week